



Distinguished Alumna in PESH
Burnie Whitson '79

Burnie Whitson graduated from Winthrop College in 1979 with a BS in Leisure Services. He is a native of Lancaster, South Carolina and but has lived in Greenville for the past thirty-four years. Burnie is being honored today for his numerous contributions and outstanding service to the Young Men's Christian Association.

Burnie began his professional career in 1980 with the Pickens County YMCA and amazingly within three years he was promoted to the Chief Executive Officer. He held this position for the next nineteen years. In 2002 Burnie was selected to serve on the National YMCA staff as a performance and organizational consultant. Burnie continues today in his YMCA career as a member of the YMCA of the USA staff team. He has been privileged to work with over 50 corporate YMCAs throughout the southeast. He provides leadership to local YMCAs in CEO Search processes, strategic planning, development of volunteer board of directors, CEO and Executive Coaching, development of strategic partnerships with Hospitals, Churches, Schools, Municipalities and Private Corporations. His primary responsibilities today are in service to all of the YMCAs of South Carolina.

Burnie is a skilled facilitator having trained under one of the premier leaders in facilitation training, Leadership Strategies, Inc. He is sought after not only as a facilitator but also as a thought leader and a public speaker in non-profit organizations. Some of his accomplishments include leading 29 different YMCA CEO Search processes, structuring recovery plans for nine YMCAs that were in danger of closing, providing site leadership planning to reestablish Louisiana YMCAs after Hurricane Katrina, organizing Christian mission work in local YMCAs, and designing Togetherhood; the YMCA's newest signature program for promoting social responsibility. Burnie also taught and lead 40 pastors in a strategic planning process at the FOBOCK Conference in Limuru, Kenya in November 2011.

Burnie has co-authored one book, 'Strengthening the Organizational Heart', Copyright 2006 by Providence Publishing Corporation and has been with many service and leadership awards. He was awarded the APD Financial Turnaround Award given by the Association of Professional Directors to the CEO who takes a YMCA with three or more years of operational deficits and produces three or more years of operational surpluses. He also received the APD Leadership Award provided by the Association of Professional Directors to for his three years of leadership as Chapter President to the Carolinas APD, the largest APD chapter at the time in the nation. Burnie was awarded Paul Harris Fellow given by the Easley Rotary Club for his leadership during 19 years of service to Rotary. Easley Rotary also honored him with a lifetime honorary membership for his service. And finally he was honored with the AYP Lifetime Achievement Award given in 2013 by the Association of YMCA Professionals in recognition of his career achievements to the YMCA Movement.

Burnie and his wife Jan (also a Winthrop grad) still live in the Greenville, SC area where they have "almost launched all four of their children." Burnie Whitson's life and career have exemplified extensive and wide-ranging leadership and service to employees and members of the YMCA, and it is with great pleasure that we, the faculty and staff of Winthrop University welcome him as a member of the Class of 2014 Distinguished Alumni.